

“Yavapai County Sheriff’s Officers”



It Takes a Village to Protect Them

By, Cathy Erwin

The Arizona Association for Pupil Transportation (AAPT) a state wide organization whose membership is made up of pupil transportation personnel from throughout the state held their annual 2 day conference on October 13-14 in Prescott, Arizona. This year Prescott Unified High School District co-hosted with the AAPT the conference which had in attendance approximately 275 persons representing 52 school districts. The 2 days of activity included state awards, board elections and business, general assemblies and workshops. This year's conference targeted "Homeland Security" issues with training on School Bus Watch and a live demonstration of a hostage rescue complete with a Sheriff's Swat Team.

On Saturday, October 13, 2007 the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office 15 person Swat Team led by team leader Sgt. Bill Suttle and assistant team leaders Deputy Rich Martin and Sgt. Nate Auvenshine, demonstrated what it would take in a last ditch effort to gain control of a school bus

which along with 2 students and a bus driver were taken hostage. Deputy Martin and Sgt. Auvenshine gave a brief explanation to the approximately 275 members in attendance prior to the presentation as to what they were about to view.

Scenario:

A 40 foot bus was under siege by a hostage taker with 2 students on board along with the bus driver. The only description of the hostage taker was that he was wearing a red flannel shirt.

The SWAT team who were looking for a small window of opportunity to gain entrance and control of the bus, ran quickly to position themselves parallel to the bus length in two man ladder stances, activated a loud noise flash diversionary device to redirect the hostage takers attention momentarily and gain entry of the bus. This all happened in a matter of seconds. The top man on the two man ladder busted the windows and gained entry and control with weapons drawn and fired when needed.

The SWAT Team members were dressed in Nomex flight suits (fire retardant), body armor, ballistic helmets, load bearing vest (LBV), Nomex gloves and eye protection. The team was successful in their ability to gain entry, quickly search and detain the terrorist. In treating this as a real situation the team detained and searched all parties that were removed from the bus. This practice is standard and follows cautioning on the side of safety. Once the threat is removed and the suspect is identified and either apprehended and/or neutralized the victims are subsequently released.

After the demonstration there was a question and answer period afforded the membership by Deputy Rich Martin and Deputy J.T. Smith. This debriefing took place in the schools auditorium and was very enlightening.

The Yavapai County Sheriffs Office Swat Team has practiced drills in the past thanks to the Humbolt School District Transportation Department located in Prescott Valley, Arizona. This was their first real demonstration and with the assistance of Eagles Aerie Schools Transportation Supervisor, Steve Laudenslager II who provided a school bus that could sustain minor damage, a successful demonstration was performed.

While a picture is worth a thousand words, a live demonstration to those persons that this directly impacts (bus drivers) is worth a million. It also heightens awareness and affords all those in attendance a reality check to what could happen. Preparedness is the difference between survival and not. While it takes a village to raise a child it also takes a village to protect them.

The Village



“Bracing for the assault.”



“Making their presence known”



“Assault in Progress”



“The Capture”



“Preparing to Torture- interrogate, using approved methods.”

